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Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Special Envoy for Tajikistan secures agreement of Tajik parties to meet in Moscow within days; fighting intensifies in Gorno-Badakshan.

+ Executive Chairman of Special Commission briefs Security Council on ongoing monitoring of Iraqi capabilities; says Iraq has not accounted for some items in biological area.

+ UNHCR reports 33 people killed in attacks on Rwandese refugee camps in Zaire; Secretary-General deplores inflammatory speeches made against UNAMIR in Kigali; calls on all segments of Rwandese society to exercise restraint.

+ UNPROFOR calls for NATO air presence after Bosnian Serb forces shell Gorazde safe area; Abdic forces launch offensive in Bihac pocket.

+ United Kingdom and Nigeria present informal paper on conflict prevention and peace-keeping in Africa to United Nations and OAU.

+ Commission on Sustainable Development could mobilize extra resources for carrying out its mandate, Chairman says.

+ Preparatory Committee for Fiftieth Anniversary decides to give Heads of State precedence over Heads of government at General Assembly commemorative meeting.

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The Special Envoy for Tajikistan, Ramiro Piriz-Ballon, has secured the agreement of the Tajik parties to meet in Moscow within days, Security Council President Karel Kovanda (Czech Republic) announced today. He told correspondents at Headquarters that the meeting might take place on 17 April. He expressed concern at the level of fighting in Tajikistan, but welcomed the Special Envoy's achievement.

A United Nations spokesman said fighting had intensified in the Gorno-Badakshan region, but the Special Envoy was working to restore the

cease-fire. Meanwhile, Russian border forces had been involved in two incidents in another region. However, a team from the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) had arranged a meeting between the Russian forces and the local opposition, at which they had agreed to stop fighting.

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The Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on the disarmament of Iraq, Rolf Ekeus, today briefed the Security Council on the ongoing monitoring of the country's capabilities. He later told correspondents that the monitoring system was operational and "humming along" satisfactorily. However, there were still some substantive shortcomings, as Iraq had not accounted for some items in the biological area.

The Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, said the monitoring system could not be substantively effective because Iraq had not yet cooperated in major areas. "The most disturbing fact is that Iraq may well have produced biological weapons which remain unaccounted for", she went on to say.

Ambassador Ekeus will continue his briefing of the Security Council tomorrow.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for High Refugees (UNHCR) today reported that at least 31 people had been killed, and 49 wounded, when unidentified men attacked a Rwandese refugee camp on the edge of Lake Kivu near Bukavu in Zaire. An attack on another camp in the area left two people dead and five wounded. A United Nations spokesman noted that cross-border attacks into Rwanda had reportedly been launched from the same area in recent months. He also noted that the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) did not include border monitoring.

The spokesman went on to say that the UNHCR had worked out arrangements with the authorities in Zaire calling for the deployment of 1,500 troops to protect Rwandese refugees. Some 700 Zairean troops had been deployed in the Goma area, where there were 740,000 refugees. There were another 300,000 Rwandese refugees in the Bukavu area.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General has deplored inflammatory speeches made against the United Nations and UNAMIR at a demonstration outside the Mission's headquarters yesterday. He expressed particular regret that some responsible officials in Rwanda had attended the demonstration and were reported to have made unfortunate statements.

The Secretary-General called on all segments of Rwandese society to exercise restraint in order not to exacerbate tensions further. He expressed the hope that the Government of Rwanda would do everything possible to ensure that UNAMIR received the cooperation necessary for carrying out its mandate.

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Bosnian Serb forces fired mortars into the safe area of Gorazde yesterday and again today, according to a United Nations spokesman. They had threatened to shell Bosnian Government positions if sniper activity in the area did not cease, and opened fire after a Bosnian Serb soldier was killed by a sniper. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) called for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air presence over the area, but did not request close air support.

Meanwhile, two people were injured when the Bosnian Serbs fired two shells into Sarajevo, the spokesman continued. Fighting intensified in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, while forces loyal to rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic launched an offensive along the northern confrontation line of the Bihac pocket.

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The United Kingdom and Nigeria have presented an informal paper on ways to enhance conflict prevention and peace-keeping in Africa to the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). At a press conference at Headquarters today, the Permanent Representatives of the two countries to the United Nations, Sir David Hannay and Ibrahim Gambari, said Africa had great potential for solving its own problems. However, it was difficult to realize that potential because of a shortage of resources and logistical difficulties, and because of obstacles to cooperation between African countries, including differences of language.

The working paper dealt with conflict prevention in terms of a much wider amassing and sharing of information on possible conflict situations, according to Ambassador Hannay. Possible preventive actions ranged from the dispatch of special representatives to the deployment of monitors or troops. The paper was not a quick fix, but a programme for several years. If followed through, it could bring about a qualitative change in the way African issues were addressed, he concluded.

Ambassador Gambari noted that Nigeria currently held the chairmanship of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations. He stressed the importance of improving cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the OAU. He added that African countries had no shortage of peace-keepers to offer, but needed external logistical and financial support.

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The Commission on Sustainable Development has the potential to mobilize additional resources for the promotion of sustainable development, according to its newly elected Chairman, Henrique Brandao Cavalcanti of Brazil. In his inaugural address yesterday, he said the Commission had an essentially

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political nature, and had a potentially wide sphere of influence in carrying out its mandate.

While the Commission had made real progress in the last two years, the awesome task of promoting and implementing Agenda 21 -- the programme of action adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit -- remained to be completed by 1997. He expressed confidence that the Commission's conclusions and recommendations would be instrumental in adapting present-day patterns to new standards of sustainability.

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Heads of State will be given precedence over Heads of government in addresses at the special commemorative meetings of the General Assembly in October, the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations has decided. In taking that decision, the Committee agreed to adhere to the Assembly practice regarding addresses during the annual general debate. It also decided to draw up the speakers' list by random selection through a public ballot.

Gillian Martin Sorensen, Special Adviser to the Secretary- General for Public Policy, outlined plans for the commemorative events to be hosted by the city of San Francisco on 25 and 26 June. She also updated the Committee on arrangements for the commemorative meetings to be held at Headquarters in October.

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